

House Republicans Threaten Department of Homeland Security Shutdown

With only 8 legislative days left until the Department of Homeland Security runs out of funding, House Republicans continue to hold our national security hostage to their political agenda. Republicans are threatening to shut down this agency by attaching draconian, anti-immigrant amendments to a clean bill to fund DHS. If House Republicans want to address President Obama's immigration executive actions, they can bring an immigration reform bill to the Floor rather than holding DHS hostage. The Senate has shown three times that House Republicans' partisan bill cannot pass that chamber, yet House Republican leaders refuse to abandon their reckless strategy, bringing DHS closer to a shut down:

Majority Whip Steve Scalise: "There's not a Plan B, because this is the plan." [The Hill, [2/3/15](#)]

The Department of Homeland Security has five primary missions: prevent terrorism and enhance security; secure and manage our borders; enforce and administer our immigration laws; safeguard and secure cyberspace; and strengthen national preparedness and resilience. Here's a look at several of the important services that would be at risk if House Republicans continue their political games:

- **Aviation Security:** DHS includes Transportation Security Administration (TSA) screening operations to ensure flight security and effectively screen passengers and luggage.
- **Radiological and Nuclear Detection:** DHS funds Radiological and Nuclear Detection Equipment, with which the Domestic Nuclear Detection Office and other DHS components, including the Coast Guard, U.S. Customs and Border Protection, and Transportation Security Administration, keep our nation's ports safe and secure by detecting potentially dangerous materials.
- **Border Security:** DHS employs border patrol agents to maintain necessary border security infrastructure and technology, improving U.S. Customs and Border Protection's ability to detect and interdict illegal activity.
- **Coast Guard:** DHS enforces laws and treaties to defend our maritime coast against illegal activity and potential acts of terrorism.
- **Cyber-Criminal Investigations:** DHS funds the United States Secret Service's network of 46 Financial Crimes Task Forces and 38 Electronic Crimes Task Forces, which continue to enable USSS to fight cyber-crime by utilizing partnerships with international law enforcement agencies through overseas field offices.
- **Network Security:** DHS fund the Continuous Diagnostics and Mitigation program focused on fortifying the cybersecurity of government networks.
- **Disaster Relief:** DHS provides grants through the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) through the Disaster Relief Fund (DRF) to help individuals and communities stricken by disasters respond and recover.
- **State, Local and Tribal Government Activities:** DHS funds a number of other activities vital to homeland security and public safety, including salaries for state and local emergency managers in all 50 states. Examples include new communications equipment for over 80 public safety agencies, surveillance cameras and environmental sensors used to detect in real time potential terrorist activity, and improved campus security at K-12 public schools, colleges and universities.

Additionally, if House Republicans fail to pass a clean DHS funding bill, front-line security personnel will have to work without pay, undermining the morale of the workforce responsible for keeping communities safe:

- More than 40,000 Border Patrol agents and Customs and Border Patrol officers
- More than 50,000 TSA aviation security screeners
- More than 13,000 Immigration and Customs Enforcement law enforcement agents and officers
- More than 40,000 active duty Coast Guard military members
- More than 4,000 Secret Service law enforcement agents and officers

There is strong bipartisan agreement on the need to fund DHS immediately, without anti-immigrant amendments:

Former DHS Secretaries Ridge, Chertoff, and Napolitano: “We do not question your desire to have a larger debate about the nation's immigration laws. However, we cannot emphasize enough that the DHS's responsibilities are much broader than its responsibility to oversee the federal immigration agencies and to protect our borders... [F]unding for the entire agency should not be put in jeopardy by the debate about immigration.... It is imperative that we ensure that DHS is ready, willing and able to protect the American people... To that end, we urge you not to risk funding for the operations that protect every American and to pass a clean DHS funding bill.” [Washington Post, [1/29/15](#)]

The U.S. Conference of Mayors: “A fully functioning Department of Homeland Security is critical to the security of our nation, our cities, and our citizens... A Department operating on a short-term continuing resolution, despite its best efforts, faces uncertainty and delays and simply cannot be fully functioning.” [Huffington Post, [2/4/15](#)]

Republican Senator Mark Kirk: “After Charlie Hebdo and the burning alive of the Jordanian pilot, we’ve got to find a way to fund DHS.” [Politico, [2/5/15](#)]

Republican Senator Susan Collins: “I would be concerned if the funding restrictions affected the ability of the Department of Homeland Security to carry out its vital functions.” [The Hill, [1/13/15](#)]

Republican Senator Lindsey Graham: “To my Republican colleagues, we're playing with fire here. We need a robust homeland security budget now.” [CNN, [1/12/15](#)]

Republican Senator John Cornyn: “...[W]e're not going to take any chances with the homeland.” [CNN, [1/11/15](#)]

Rep. David Valadao (R-CA): “The legislation passed in the House eliminates prosecutorial discretion, placing immigrant children and violent criminals and sex offenders at equal levels... I could not support legislation that utilizes our finite resources in such an irresponsible way.” [Politico, [1/14/15](#)]

Rep. Jeff Denham (R-CA): “This bill is being done for political messaging and I think the message is all wrong...” [The Hill, [1/15/15](#)]

“Former department officials say the uncertainty over funding is hurting programs that monitor federal networks, provide cybersecurity tools to federal agencies and share information with companies to bolster private sector cyber defenses.” [The Hill, [2/8/15](#)]

Office of Democratic Whip Steny H. Hoyer, 02/10/15

“At a closed-door lunch late last month, one Republican senator after another questioned how their party will escape its political jam on immigration... The GOP-led House had just created a quandary with no easy way out — passing a \$39.7 billion Department of Homeland Security spending bill loaded with riders on immigration policy that stand no chance of clearing a Democratic filibuster in the Senate. And with funding set to run out at the end of February, some GOP senators were in no mood to play endless games with the House. ‘We just need to rip the Band-Aid off,’ said one Republican senator, saying the Senate should strip out all the immigration language and pass a ‘clean’ DHS funding bill. ‘I think the House guys rolled a grenade in the room,’ a second GOP senator said later.” [Politico, [2/2/15](#)]

Newspaper editorial boards are also criticizing House Republicans’ decision to hold our national security hostage to their immigration politics:

Wall Street Journal: “Republicans in Congress are off to a less than flying start after a month in power, dividing their own conference more than Democrats. Take the response to President Obama’s immigration order, which seems headed for failure if not a more spectacular crack-up... DHS funding runs out this month, and the GOP has now marched itself into another box canyon... **If Homeland Security funding lapses on Feb. 27, the agency will be pushed into a partial shutdown even as the terrorist threat is at the forefront of public attention with the Charlie Hebdo and Islamic State murders. Imagine if the Transportation Security Administration, a unit of DHS, fails to intercept an Islamic State agent en route to Detroit. So Republicans are facing what is likely to be another embarrassing political retreat and more intra-party recriminations. The GOP’s restrictionist wing will blame the leadership for a failure they share responsibility for, and the rest of America will wonder anew about the gang that couldn’t shoot straight. The restrictionist caucus can protest all it wants, but it can’t change 54 Senate votes into 60 without persuading some Democrats. It’s time to find another strategy...**” [[2/9/15](#)]

Washington Post: “How far will Republicans in Congress take their reckless flirtation with undermining government this time? Will they, as seems increasingly likely, fail to pass a bill that the president can sign ensuring adequate funding for the Department of Homeland Security and its 280,000 employees before the agency’s support expires Feb. 27? **Are they ready to let funding lapse, secure in the knowledge that Border Patrol officers, Secret Service agents, airport security personnel and other so-called essential employees would still have to report to work — even though they would not be drawing paychecks?** A number of prominent Republican lawmakers clearly believe that denying funding to the nation’s premier organ of domestic security is no big deal, as long as the move expresses the GOP’s anger about President Obama’s executive actions on immigration... However, **it is another thing to wield their frustration over immigration as a cudgel, holding hostage an entire department of government that is critical to the nation’s security. That is as irresponsible as it is politically ill advised...** In the absence of a bill, the department’s funding lapses in less than a month. **What happens in the intervening weeks will indicate whether Republicans are more interested in gamesmanship or governance.**” [[2/1/15](#)]

The next three weeks will make clear what House Republicans see as their top priority – will they choose political games or responsible governing? As we approach the February 27 deadline, it is time for House Republicans to work with Democrats to pass a clean DHS bill to keep Americans safe without delay, and then work on a bipartisan basis to pass comprehensive immigration reform, which an overwhelming majority of Americans support.